

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for protecting *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 against stress, which comprises the ~~steps~~ step of treating said *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 with ~~a sublethal level of stress selected from the group consisting of thermal shock, osmotic shock, pH shock, oxidative stress, chemical stress, nutritional stress, UV stress and cold stress;~~ and treating with about 3.5% NaCl for at least 15 minutes.

Claim 2 (cancelled)

Claim 3 (currently amended): ~~The~~ A ~~method of claim 1 for protecting *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 against stress,~~ method of claim 1 for protecting *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 against stress, which comprises the ~~steps~~ step of ~~treating~~ exposing said *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 ~~at to~~ at a temperature of about 48°C for ~~about~~ at least 15 minutes.

Claim 4 (withdrawn): A *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 obtained through a process of subjecting *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 to a sublethal level of stress selected from the group consisting of thermal shock, osmotic shock, pH-shock, oxidative stress, chemical stress, nutritional stress, UV stress and cold stress.

Claim 5 (cancelled)

Claim 6 (cancelled):

Claim 7 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 4, obtained through a process that comprises the steps of treating with about 3.5% NaCl for 15 minutes.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 4, obtained through a process that comprises the steps of treating at a temperature of about 48°C for about 15 minutes.

Claim 9 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 4, obtained through a process that includes the step of subjecting the *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 to a salt.

Claim 10 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 4, wherein the *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 is subjected to the stress for at least 15 minutes.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): A *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 that is protected against heat stress of up to 55°C for up to an hour obtained through a process comprising the step of subjecting *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 to a sublethal level of stress selected from the group consisting of thermal shock, osmotic shock, pH-shock, oxidative stress, chemical stress, nutritional stress, UV stress and cold stress.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 11, which comprises the steps of treating with about 3.5% NaCl for 15 minutes.

Claim 13 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 11, which comprises the steps of treating at a temperature of about 48°C for about 15 minutes.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 11 including the step of subjecting the *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 to a salt.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): The *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 of claim 11 wherein the *Lactobacillus johnsonii* La1 is subjected to the stress for at least 15 minutes.